

THE DAUGHTERS OF DR. BYLES.

A SKETCH OF REALITY.

BY MISS LEBLITZ.

On my first visit to Boston, about nine years since, was offered, by a lady of that kind and hospitable city, (the paradise of strangers,) an introduction to the two daughters of the celebrated Mather Byles: and I gladly availed myself of this opportunity of becoming acquainted with these singular women, whom, I had been told, were classed among the curiosities of the place.

Their father, a native Bostonian, (born in 1706, during the reign of Queen Anne,) was connected with the family of Cotton Mather. His education was completed in England, where he studied theology at Cambridge, and was afterwards ordained a minister of the gospel according to the Episcopal faith. On his return to Boston, Mather Byles was inducted into the first pastorate of Hollis street church, then a newly-erected edifice, constructed entirely of wood, as were most American churches of that period. He became proprietor of a house and a small piece of ground near the junction of Tremont and Nassau streets. In this house all his children were born, and here the two that survived were still living. His wife was a daughter of Governor Taylor.

The position of Dr. Byles as a clergyman, his literary acquirements, his shrewd sense, and his ready wit, caused him to be highly popular at home, and brought him into personal acquaintance or epistolary correspondence with many of the principal men of his time, on both sides of the Atlantic. He frequently exchanged letters with Pope and with Dr. Watts: and among the visitors at his "modest mansion" might be enumerated some of the most distinguished persons of his native province—while strangers of note eagerly sought his acquaintance.

All went smoothly with Dr. Byles till America became impatient of her dependence on the crown of Britain; and, unfortunately for him, his sympathies were on the side of the mother country. He could not be persuaded that her children of the new world had sufficient cause for abrogating the authority of the nation from whence they had sprung; and he considered their alleged grievances as mere pretexts for throwing off a chain which, in his opinion, had pressed but lightly on them; and that, in short, as Falstaff said of the Percy and Mortimer insurrection,—"Rebellion lay in their way, and they found it." His congregation had warmly and almost unanimously espoused the popular cause, and, consequently, were much irritated at the ultra royalist feelings and

opinions of their pastor, whose difficulties with his flock seeming daily to increase, Dr. Byles eventually thought it best to resign his situation as minister of Hollis street church.

The war broke out; the battle of Bunker Hill was fought, and Boston was subsequently occupied by the British army, and besieged by the Americans, who established themselves in hostile array upon the heights that commanded the town,—and, with a view of dislodging the enemy, they vigilantly exerted themselves in stopping all supplies of fuel and provisions. After holding out against the patriots during a leaguer of more than eight months, the British finally withdrew their forces, and embarked them to carry the war into another section of the country. Now, that something like order was again restored in the town of Boston and its vicinity, it was thought time to punish those who had rendered themselves obnoxious by aiding and abetting the cause of the enemy. Some of the most noted royalists were expelled from the province and took refuge in Nova Scotia, others went into voluntary exile and repaired to England, where they preferred a claim of indemnification for the losses they had sustained by adhering to the cause of monarchy. Among others, Dr. Mather Byles was denounced at a town-meeting, for his unconcealed toryism: for having persisted in praying for the king; and for interchanging visits with the British officers, most of whom were received familiarly at his house. Upon these charges he was tried before a special court, and at first sentenced to have his property confiscated, and himself and family transported to England. But the board of war, out of respect to his private character, commuted his punishment to a short imprisonment in his own house, under the guard of sentinels, and allowed him to retain his possessions.

The rebellion eventuated in a successful revolution; and honor, fame, and the gratitude of their country rewarded those who had assisted in the glorious contest for independence; while all who had held back, and all who had sided with the enemy, were contumeliously cast into the shade, regarded with contempt by their former associates, or compelled to wear out their lives in exile from the land of their birth. Most of the connections of the Byles family quitted the States. But the doctor remained, and finding that he could not regain his former place among his townsmen, he lived in retirement during

the residue of his life, and died at his own house in Boston, in 1788, in the 82d year of his age. He was interred beneath the pavement of the chancel in Trinity church, having worshipped there with his family after quitting that of Hollis street.

In the old family house his two surviving daughters had ever since continued to reside, steadily refusing to sell either the building or the lot of ground attached to it, though liberal offers for its purchase had repeatedly been made to them. So deep-rooted was their attachment to this spot, where they had been born, and where they had always lived, that they considered it impossible for them to exist in any other place, continually asserting that a removal from it would certainly kill them. They had a trifling source of income which brought them two hundred dollars annually, and they contrived to save nearly the whole of this little sum. Also, they possessed a tolerable quantity of old-fashioned plate, which they had put away in a chest up stairs, never to be used or sold while they lived. In the mean time their wants were chiefly supplied, (and, indeed, many little luxuries were furnished them,) by the benevolence of certain ladies of Boston, who, in the goodness of their hearts, overlooked the anomaly of two women who had the means of a comfortable independence within their reach, submitting to receive assistance from eleemosynary bounty rather than relinquish the indulgence of what, in those matter-of-fact times, would, by most persons, be regarded as a mere morbid fancy. But on this point of feeling they believed their happiness to depend; and their tolerant benefactresses kindly enabled them to be happy in their own way.

The Miss Byleses kept no domestic; but a man came every morning to attend to the wood and water part of their *ménage*, and to go their errands — and a woman was employed every week to do up the Saturday work. A newspaper was sent to them gratuitously — books were lent to them, for the youngest was something of a reader, and also wrote verses; and they frequently received little presents of cakes, sweetmeats, and other delicacies. They rarely went out, except to Trinity church. Then they put on their everlasting suits of the same Sunday clothes: their faces being, on these occasions, shaded with deep black veils suspended from their bonnets, not so much for concealment as for gentility.

The lady who volunteered to introduce me to the daughters of Dr. Byles, was, as I afterwards understood, one of those who assisted in affording them some of the comforts which they denied to themselves. We set out on our visit on one of the loveliest mornings of a Boston summer, the warmth of the season being delightfully tempered by a cool breeze from the sea. After passing the beautiful Common, (why has it not a better name?) my companion pointed out to me, at what seemed the termination of the long vista of Tremont street, an old black-looking frame-house, which, at the distance from whence I saw it, seemed to block up the way by standing directly across it. It was the ancient residence of

Mather Byles, and the present dwelling of his aged daughters; one of whom was in her eighty-first and the other in her seventy-ninth year. This part of Tremont street, which is on the south-eastern declivity of a hill, carried us far from all vicinity to the aristocratic section of Boston.

At length we arrived at the domain of the two antique maidens. It was surrounded by a board fence, which had once been a very close one, but time and those universal depredators, "the boys," had made numerous cracks and chinks in it. The house (which stood with the gable end to the street) looked as if it had never been painted in its life. Its exposure to the sun and rain, to the heats of a hundred summers and the snows of a hundred winters, had darkened its whole outside nearly to the blackness of iron. Also, it had, even in its best days, been evidently one of the plainest and most unbeautiful structures in the town of Boston, where many of the old frame-houses can boast of a redolence of quaint ornament about the doors, and windows, and porches, and balconies. Still, there was something not unpleasant in its aspect, or rather in its situation. It stood at the upper end of a green lot, whose long thick grass was enamelled with field flowers. It was shaded with noble horse-chestnut trees relieved against the clear blue sky, and whose close and graceful clusters of long jagged leaves, fanned by the light summer breeze, threw their chequered and quivering shadows on the grass beneath, and on the mossy roof of the venerable mansion.

We entered the enclosure by a board gate, whose only fastening was a wooden latch with a leather string; like that which secured the wicket of Little Red Ridinghood's grand-mother. There was a glimpse of female figures hastily flitting away from a front window. We approached the house by a narrow pathway, worn by frequent feet, in the grass, and a few paces brought us to the front door with its decayed and tottering wooden steps. My companion knocked, and the door was immediately opened by a rather broad-framed and very smiling old lady, habited in a black worsted petticoat and a white short-gown, into the neck of which was tucked a book-muslin kerchief. Her silver hair was smoothly arranged over a wrinkled but well-formed forehead, beneath which twinkled two small blue eyes. Her head was covered with a close full-bordered white linen cap, that looked equally convenient for night or for day. She welcomed us with much apparent pleasure, and my companion introduced her to me as Miss Mary Byles. She was the eldest of the two sisters.

Miss Mary ushered us into the parlor, which was without a carpet, and its scanty furniture seemed at least a century old. Beneath a surprisingly high mantel-piece was a very low fire-place, from whence the andirons having been removed for the summer, its only accoutrement was a marvellous thick cast-iron back-plate, of a pattern antique even to rudeness. There were a few straight tall-backed chairs, some with bottoms of flag-rush, and others with bottoms of listing; and there was one *fautouil*, to be

described hereafter. My attention was attracted by the oldest-looking table I had ever seen, and of so dark a hue that it was difficult to tell whether it was mahogany or walnut. When opened out it must have been circular; but, now that the leaves were let down, it exhibited a top so strangely narrow (not more than half a foot in width) that it was impossible to divine the object in making it so; unless, indeed, it was the fashionable table of the time. And fashion, at all periods, has been considered reason sufficient for anything, however inconvenient, ugly or absurd. To support the narrow top and the wide leaves, this table seemed to be endowed with a hundred legs and a proportionate number of bars crossing among them, in every direction, all being of very elaborate turned work. I opine that this must have been a great table in its day.

My companion inquired after the health of Miss Catherine Byles, the youngest of the ladies. Miss Mary replied that sister Catherine was quite unwell, having passed a bad night with the rheumatism. Regret was expressed at our losing the pleasure of seeing her. But Miss Mary politely assured us that her sister would exert herself to appear, rather than forego an opportunity of paying her respects to the ladies; and we as politely hoped that, on our account, she would not put herself to the smallest inconvenience. While compliments were thus flying, the door of the next room opened, and Miss Catherine Byles made her entrance, in a manner which showed us that she went much by gracefulness.

Miss Catherine was unlike her elder sister, both in figure and face; her features being much sharper, (in fact, excessively sharp,) and her whole person extremely thin: She also was arrayed in a black bombasin petticoat, a short-gown, and a close lined cap, with a deep border that seemed almost to bury her narrow visage. She greeted us with much cordiality, and complained of her rheumatism with a smiling countenance.

My eyes were soon rivetted on a fine portrait of Dr. Mather Byles, from the wonderful pencil of Copley — wonderful in its excellence at a period when the divine art was scarcely known in the provinces, and when a good picture rarely found its way to our side of the ocean. And yet, under these disadvantages, and before he sought improvement in the schools of Europe, did Copley achieve those extraordinary fac-similes of the human face, that might justly entitle him to the appellation of the Reynolds of America, and are scarcely excelled by those of his cotemporary, the Reynolds of England.

The moment I looked at this picture I knew that it *must* be a likeness; for I saw in its lineaments the whole character of Dr. Byles, particularly the covert humor of the eye. The face was pale, the features well-formed, and the aspect pleasantly acute. He was represented in his ecclesiastical habiliments, with a curled and powdered wig. On his finger was a signet-ring containing a very fine red cornelian. While I was contemplating the admirably-depicted countenance, his daughters were both very voluble in directing my attention to the cornelian ring, which

they evidently considered the best part of the picture; declaring it to be an exact likeness of that very ring, and just as natural as life.

Before I had looked half enough at Copley's picture, the two old ladies directed my attention to another portrait which they seemed to prize still more highly. This, they informed me, was that of their nephew, "poor boy," whom they had not seen for forty years. It was painted by himself. — His name was Mather Brown, and he was the only son of their deceased elder sister. He had removed to London, where, as they informed me, he had *taken* the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York — "and, therefore," said one of the aunts — "he is painter to the royal family." They both expressed much regret that they had not been able to prevail on their father, after the revolution, to give up America entirely, and remove with his family to England. "In that case," said Miss Mary, "we should all have been introduced at court; and the king and queen would have spoken to us; and I dare say would have thanked us kindly for our loyalty."

The truth was, as I afterwards found, that a much longer period than forty years had elapsed since their nephew left America; but they always continued to give that date to his departure. He had painted himself with his hair reared up perpendicularly from his forehead, powdered well, and tied behind, — and, in a wide blue coat with yellow buttons, and a very stiff hard-plaited shirt-frill with hand-ruffles to match. In his hand he held an open letter, which, both his aunts informed me, contained the very words of an epistle sent by one of them to him, and, therefore, was an exact likeness of that very letter. To gratify them, I read aloud the pictured missive, thereby proving that it really contained legible words.

Having looked at the pictures, I was invited by Miss Mary Byles to take my seat in the large arm-chair, which she assured me was a great curiosity, being more than a hundred years old, having been sent over from England by "government," as a present to their maternal grandfather, Governor Taylor. The chair was of oak, nearly black with age, and curiously and elaborately carved. The back was very tall and straight, and the carving on its top terminated in a crown. This chair was furnished with an old velvet cushion, which was always (by way of preservation) kept upside down, the underside being of dark calico. Miss Mary, however, did me the honor, as a visitor, to turn the right side up, that I might sit upon velvet; and as soon as I had placed myself on it, she enquired if I found it an easy seat? On my replying in the affirmative. "I am surprised at that" — said she, with a smile — "I wonder how a republican can sit easy under the crown." — Beginning to understand my cue, I, of course, was properly diverted with this piece of wit.

Miss Catherine then directed my attention to the antique round table, and assured me that at this very table Dr. Franklin had drank tea on his last visit to Boston. Miss Mary then produced, from a closet by the chimney-side, an ancient machine of timber and iron in the form of a bellows, which she informed

me was two hundred years old. It looked as if it might have been two thousand, and must have been constructed in the very infancy of bellows-making, about the time when people first began to grow tired of blowing their fires with their mouths. It would have afforded a strange contrast, and a striking illustration of the march of intellect, if placed by the side of one of those light and beautiful, painted, gilt and varnished fire-improvers which abound in certain shops in Washington street. This bellows of other days was so heavy that it seemed to require a strong man to work it. The handles and sides were carved all over with remarkably cumbrous devices; and the nozzle or spout was about the size and shape of a very large parsnep with the point cut off.

Miss Mary now asked her sister if *she* had no curiosities to show the ladies? Miss Catherine modestly replied that she feared she had nothing the ladies would care to look at. Miss Mary assured us that sister Catherine had a box of extraordinary things, such as were not to be seen every day, and that they were universally considered as very great curiosities. Miss Catherine still seemed meekly inclined to undervalue them. My companion, who *had* seen the things repeatedly, begged that their Philadelphia visitor might be indulged with a view of these rarities—and, finally, after a little more coquetry, a sort of square band-box was produced, and Miss Catherine did the honors of her little museum.

She showed us the envelope of a letter addressed to her father by no less a person than Alexander Pope, and directed in the poet's own hand. The writing was clear and handsome, and had evidently been executed with a new pen, and with a desire that the superscription should look well. Next, were exhibited four commissions, each bearing the signature of a different British sovereign. The names of the royal personages were placed at the top of the document and not at the bottom. This, the old ladies told us was to show that royalty ought to go before every thing else. The first signature was that of Queen Anne, and headed the appointment of their grandfather to the government of the province of Massachusetts. I have never in my life seen any autograph so bad as that of "great Anne whom three realms obeyed"—if this was to be considered a fair specimen. It looked as if nobody had ever taught her to write, and had the appearance of being scratched on the paper, not with a *pen* but with a *pin* dipped in ink. I believe it is related of the Emperor Charlemagne (who pressed the seals of his missives with the hilt of his dagger) that he effected his signature by plunging his thumb into the ink, and making with it a large black spot or blot on the parchment. No doubt, being a man of sense, he took care that his dab or smear should always be of exactly the same shape and dimension, and so *unique* in its look as to preclude the possibility of counterfeits.

The next document shown us by Miss Catherine, was honored with the name of the First George—that sapient Elector of Hanover, whose powers of

comprehension were so obtuse that he never could be made exactly to understand by what means he succeeded to the throne of England, and often said "he was afraid he was keeping some honest man out of his place." His majesty's pen-maker was palpably unworthy of holding that office, for, in this autograph, both up strokes and down were so thick that they looked as if done with the feather of the quill instead of its point.

Afterwards was displayed a commission signed by George the Second. Here the royal caligraphy seemed on the mend. The signature was well written, and his majesty's pen-provider was evidently fit for his station.

Last, was a paper bearing the name of George the Third, written in a fair and easy hand, but rather inferior to that of his predecessor, notwithstanding that the second of the Hanoverian monarchs had "never liked bainting or boetry in all his life, and did not know what good there was in either."

It is a most fallacious and illiberal hypothesis that the hand-writing is characteristic of the mind. And those who profess that theory frequently employ it as a vehicle for the conveyance of impertinent and unjust remarks.

We were next shown a small portion of moss gathered from the time-honored roof of Bradgate Hall, the mansion in which the unfortunate Lady Jane Grey first saw the light.

These relics of the departed great were followed by the exhibition of some little articles, only remarkable as specimens of mechanical ingenuity. Among them was a large deep-red mulberry, looking surprisingly like a real one.

"And now," said Miss Catherine, "I will show you the greatest curiosity of all." She then took out an inner pasteboard box that had been placed within the larger one, and setting it on the floor, produced, from a round hole in the lid, an artificial snake, that looked something like a very long, very close string of button-molds. By giving it some mysterious impulse, she set the reptile in motion, and caused it to run about in the neighborhood of our feet. We thought it best to be a little startled and a little frightened, and very greatly surprised at the ingenuity of the thing. After we had sufficiently enjoyed the sight, Miss Catherine attempted to replace her snake in the box, telling him it was time to go home. But he seemed rather refractory, and quite unwilling to re-enter his prison. "What"—said she—chastising him with two or three smart taps—"won't you go in.—Are *you* a rebel too!"—The serpent stood rebuked; and then obediently hurried back into his hole. And we laughed as in duty bound—also with some admiration at the old lady's slight of hand in managing the reptile.

Miss Mary, having completed the exhibition of her snake, now addressed Miss Mary, and proposed that her sister should show us an extraordinary trick, "which always astonished the ladies." To this Miss Catherine made some objection, lest we should have her taken up and hanged for a witch. On our promising not to do so, she took a scrap of white

paper which she tore into four little bits, and then laid them in a row on the table. Having done this, she left the room, shutting the door closely after her, so as to convince us, that while remaining outside it was impossible for her to see or hear anything that was done in her absence. Miss Catherine now desired me to touch, with my finger, one of the bits of paper — any one I pleased. I touched the second — and Miss Mary was then called in by her sister, who said to her, as she entered, — “Be quick.” — Miss Mary immediately advanced to the table, and unhesitatingly designated the second paper as that which I touched while she was out of the room. Being unacquainted with the trick, I was really surprised; and wondered how she could have guessed so correctly. The trick was several times repeated, and every time with perfect success.

After I had been thoroughly astonished, and declared my utter inability to fathom the mystery, the sisters explained to me its very simple process. The four bits of paper, arranged on the table in a row, denoted the four first letters of the alphabet. — When I touched the second, (which signified B,) Miss Catherine directed her sister to it by saying, as she returned to the room — “Be quick.” — When I touched the third — D — Miss Mary, on her entrance, was saluted by her sister with the words — “Do you think you can tell?” — After I had touched the first paper, A, Miss Mary was asked — “Are you sure you can guess?” — and when I touched C, Miss Catherine said to Miss Mary, “Come and try once more.” And thus, by commencing each sentence with the letter that had just been touched, she unfailingly pointed out to her sister the exact paper. To succeed in this little trick, there must, of course, be an understanding between the two persons that exhibit it: and to most of the uninitiated it appears very surprising. By adopting a similar plan of collusion, some of the professors of Mesmerism have

contrived to obtain from their magnetized sleepers, replies which, to the audience, seemed truly astonishing.

We now arose to take our leave; and our attention was then directed to a square pine table standing by one of the windows, and covered with particularly uninviting specimens of pincushions, needle-books, emery-bags, &c. The old ladies informed us that this was a charity table, which they kept for the benefit of “the poor.” I had thought that the Miss Byleses were their own poor. However, we gratified them by adding a trifling sum to their means of doing good: and I became the proprietor of the ugliest needle-book I had ever seen. But I magnanimously left the less ugly things to tempt the choice of those persons who really make an object of their purchases at charity tables. — “Dear good little me.”

The Miss Byleses were very urgent in inviting me to repeat my visit, saying, that any time of the day after nine o'clock, they were always ready to see company, and would be happy to receive me and such friends as I might wish to bring with me. And they enumerated among their visitors, from other parts of the Union, some highly eminent personages.

While we were listening to the “more last words” of Miss Catherine, her sister slipped out into the very short passage that led to the house door, and then slipped back again. — We, at last, paid our parting compliments, and Miss Mary escorted us to the front door, but seemed to find it locked, and seemed to find it impossible to unlock. This gave her occasion to say wittily — “The ladies will have to send home for their night-caps; as they are likely to be kept here all night.” Luckily, however, this necessity was obviated, by the key yielding as soon as it was turned the right way: and finally Miss Mary Byles curtsied and smiled us out.

(To be concluded.)

THE EYES OF NIGHT.

BY MISS MARY SPENCER.

NIGHT has eyes — sparkling eyes !
Some soft, some bright ;
The flashing fire ne'er dies
From eyes of night.

Night has many woovers
To watch her eyes,
To love her silent hours
And mellow skies.

Night has a witching spell
To bind the heart ;
Its silent glances quell
And awe impart.

A perfumed breath has Night :
It wafts the sighs
Of flowers young and bright
Around the skies.

Night has a breathing tone
Like distant swell
Of softest music, thrown
From fairy's knell.

Oh ! how I love the Night !
Its sparkling eyes —
Its softened shadowy light —
Its melodies.

THE DAUGHTERS OF DR. BYLES.

A SKETCH FROM REALITY.

(Concluded from page 65.)

BY MISS LESLIE.

PART II.

HAVING thus become acquainted with the two Miss Byleses, and understanding that they were always delighted when strangers were brought to see them in a similar manner, I afterwards became the introducer of several friends from other cities, who successively visited Boston in the course of that summer, and who expressed a desire to pay their compliments to these singular old ladies.

In every instance, the same routine was pursued upon these occasions by the two sisters, and the practice of nearly half a century had, of course, made them perfect in it. I was told by a lady who had known the Miss Byleses long and intimately, and had introduced to them, at their house, not less than fifty persons, that she had never observed the slightest variation in their usual series of sayings and doings. And so I always found it, whenever I brought them a new visitor. Miss Mary always came to receive us at the front door,—and Miss Catharine always produced her own effect by not making her appearance, till we had sat sometime in the parlour. The attention of the stranger was always, in the same words, directed to the cornelian ring on their father's picture, and always the new guests were placed in the great carved chair, and the same wonder was expressed that "they should sit easy under the crown." Always did their visitor hear the history of "their nephew, poor boy, whom they had not seen for forty years." Always did Miss Catharine with the same diffidence exhibit the snake,—and always was the snake unwilling to re-enter his box, till he had been brought to obedience by a little wholesome chastisement. The astounding trick of the alphabetical bits of paper was unfailingly shown;—and, always when the visitors gave symptoms of departure, did Miss Mary slip out of the room, and lock the front door, that she might have an opportunity of repeating her excellent joke about the ladies night caps.

It was very desirable that all ladies and gentlemen, taken to see the Miss Byleses, should have sufficient tact to be astonished up to the exact point at the exhibition of their curiosities, that they should laugh, just enough, at their witticisms; and that they should humor, rather than controvert, their gratuitous manifestations of loyalty to the person they called their rightful king.

My friend Mr. Sully, (who was glad to have an opportunity of seeing Copley's portrait of Dr. Byles,) enacted his part *à merveille*;—or rather, it was no

acting at all; but the genuine impulse of his kind and considerate feelings, and of his ever-indulgent toleration for the peculiarities of such minds as are not so fortunate as to resemble his own.

Another gentleman who was desirous of an introduction to the sisters, rather alarmed me by over-doing his part,—and, as I thought, being rather *too much* amazed at the curiosities; and rather too mirthful at the jokes,—and rather too warm in praising kings and deprecating presidents. But on this occasion, I threw away a great deal of good uneasiness, for I afterwards found that the Miss Byleses, spoke of this very gentleman as one of the most sensible and agreeable men they had ever seen,—and one who had exactly the right way of talking and behaving.

A lady who testified a wish to accompany me on a visit to the Miss Byleses, found little either to interest or amuse her,—the truth was, that being unable to enter the least into their characters, she looked very gravely all the time, and afterwards told me she saw nothing in them but foolishness.

I must do the Miss Byleses the justice to say, that they appeared to much less advantage on these the first visits of new people, than to those among the initiated, who took sufficient interest in them to cultivate an after-acquaintance. I went sometimes alone to sit an hour with them towards the decline of a summer afternoon,—and then I always found them infinitely more rational than when "putting themselves through their facings," to show off to strangers. In the course of these quiet visits, they told me many little circumstances connected with the royalist side of our revolutionary contest, that I could scarcely have obtained from any other source,—the few persons yet remaining among us that were tories during that eventful period, taking care to say as little about it as possible: and every one is so considerate as to ask them no questions on a subject so sore to them.

But with the daughters of Dr. Byles, the case was quite different. They gloried,—they triumphed, in the firm adherence of their father and his family to the royalty of England,—and scorned the idea of even now being classed among the *citoyennes* of a republic; a republic which, as they said, *they* had never acknowledged, and never would; regarding themselves still as faithful subjects to the majesty of Britain, whoever that majesty might be. Of the kings that they knew of, they had a decided preference for George the Third, as the monarch of their youthful

days, and under whom the most important events of their lives had taken place. All since the revolution was nearly a blank in their memories;—they dated almost entirely from that period,—and since then, they had acquired but a scanty accession to the number of their ideas. From their visitors they learnt little or nothing, as they always had the chief of the talk to themselves. With English history, and with the writers of the first half of the last century they were somewhat conversant,—but all that had transpired in the literary and political world since the peace of '83, was to them indistinct and shadowy as the images of a dream not worth remembering. But they talked of what, to us, is now the olden time with a vividness of recollection that seemed as if the things had occurred but yesterday. In the coloring of their pictures, I, of course, made allowance for the predominant tinge of toryism, and who for a large portion of the lingering vanity, which I regarded indulgently, because it injured no one, and their self-satisfaction added to the happiness of these isolated old ladies. They once showed me, in an upper room, portraits of themselves at the ages of seventeen and eighteen, painted by Pelham, the brother-in-law, I believe, of Copley. The pictures were tolerably executed; and I think they *must* have been likenesses, for the faded faces of the octagenarian sisters still retained some resemblance to their youthful prototypes. The Miss Byleses were not depicted in the prevailing costume of that period. They had neither hoop-petticoats, stomachers, nor powdered heads,—both were represented in a species of non-descript garments, imagined by the painter,—and for head gear, Miss Catharine had her own fair locks in a state of nature,—and Miss Mary a thing like a small turban.

From their own account they must have been regarded somewhat in the light of belles by the British officers. They talked of walking on the Common arm in arm with General Howe and Lord Percy: both of whom, they said, were frequent visitors at the house, and often took tea and spent the evening there.

I imagined the heir of Northumberland, taking his tea in the old parlour, by the old fire-place, at the old tea-table,—entertained by the witticisms of Dr. Byles, and the prettinesses of his daughters; who, of course, were the envy of all the female Tories of Boston, at least of those who could not aspire to the honor of being talked to by English noblemen. Moreover, Lord Percy frequently ordered the band of his regiment to play under the chestnut trees, for the gratification of the Miss Byleses, who then, as they said, had "God save the King" in perfection. By the bye, I have never heard either God save the king or Rule Britannia *well* played by an American band; though our musicians seem to perform the Marseillois *con amore*.

The venerable ladies told me that the intimacy of their family with the principal British officers became so well known, that in a short time they found it expedient to close their shutters before dark, as the lights gleaming through the parlor windows made the house of Dr. Byles, a mark for the Americans to

fire at from their fortifications on Dorchester heights, in the hope that every ball might destroy a red-coated visitor. Also, that the cannon-shot, still sticking in the tower of Brattle-street church, was aimed by the Cambridge rebels at General Howe, who had established his head-quarters at the old Province House. Unpractised artillerymen as they then were, it is difficult to believe that, if the Province House was really their mark, they could have missed it so widely.

The Miss Byleses related many anecdotes of their father; some of which were new to me, and with others I had long been familiar. For the benefit of such of my readers as have not yet met with any of these old fashioned *jeux d'esprit* I will insert a few samples of their quality.

For instance, his daughters told me of the doctor walking one day with a whig gentleman, in the vicinity of the Common, where a division of the British troops lay encamped. His companion pointing to the soldiers of the crown—said—"you see there the cause of all our evils—"—But you cannot say that our evils are not *red-dressed*," remarked Dr. Byles, "Your pun is not a good one," observed his companion, "you have mis-spelt the word by adding another D."—"Well—" replied the clerical joker,—“as a doctor of divinity, am I not entitled to the use of two D's."

They spoke of their father's captivity in his own mansion. And one of them repeated to me the well known story of Dr. Byles coming out to the centinel who was on guard, in a porch that then ran along the front of the house, and requesting him to go to the street pump and bring a bucket of cold water, as the day was warm, and the doctor very thirsty. The soldier, it seems, at first declined; alledging his reluctance to violate the rules of the service by quitting his post before the relief came round. The doctor assured the man that *he* would take his place, and be his own guard till the water was brought. The centinel at last complied; and took the bucket and went to the pump,—first resigning his musket to Dr. Byles, who shouldered it in a very soldier-like manner, and paced the porch, guarding himself till the sentry came back,—to whom on returning his piece, he said,—“Now my friend, you see I have been guarded—re-guarded—and dis-regarded."

The Miss Byleses also referred to the anecdote of their father having once paid his addresses to a lady who refused him, and afterwards married the Mr. Quincy of that time, a name which then, as now, is frequently in Boston pronounced Quinsy. The doctor afterwards meeting the lady, said to her jocosely,—“Your taste in distempers must be very bad, when it has led you to prefer the Quinsy to Byles."

In front of the house was in former times a large deep slough, that had been suffered by the municipal authorities to remain there for several winters, with all its inconveniences, which in wet weather rendered it nearly impassable. One day, Dr. Byles observed from his window that a chaise, containing two of the select men, or regulators of the town, had been completely arrested in its progress by sticking fast in the

thick heavy mud,—and they were both obliged to get out, and putting their shoulders to the wheel, work almost knee-deep in the mire before they could liberate their vehicle. The doctor came out to his gate, and bowing respectfully, said to them—"Gentlemen, I have frequently represented that slough to you as a nuisance to the street, but hitherto without any effect. Therefore I am rejoiced to see you *stirring* in the matter at last."

Certain fanatics who called themselves New-Lights had become very obnoxious to the more rational part of the community, and were regarded with much displeasure by the orthodox churches. A woman of this sect, who lived in the neighborhood, came in as usual, one morning, to annoy Dr. Byles, by a long argumentative, or rather vituperative visit. "Have you heard the news?" asked the doctor, immediately on the entrance of his unwelcome guest; he having just learnt the arrival, from London, of three hundred street lamps.

She replied in the negative.

"Well then,"—resumed the doctor,—“Not less than three hundred new lights have just arrived from England, and the civil authorities are going immediately to have them all put in irons.”

The lady was shocked to hear of the cruel treatment designed for her sectarian brethren that had just come over, and she hastened away directly, to spread the intelligence among all her acquaintances, in the hope, as she said, that something might be done to prevent the infliction of so unmerited a punishment. And the doctor congratulated himself on the success of the jest by which he had gotten rid of a troublesome visitor.

A son of Dr. Byles, that retired to Halifax, must have probably inherited a portion of his father's mantle; for his sisters repeated to me one of his conundrums, the humor of which almost atones for its coarseness—"Why do the leaders of insurrections resemble men that like sausages?"—"Because they are fond of intestine broils."

The Miss Byesses told me much of the scarcity of provisions and fire-wood, throughout Boston, during the winter of 1775, when the British and their adherents held out the town against the Yankee rebels, as they called them—and who had invested it everywhere on the land side, taking especial care that no supplies should pass in. It was then that the old North Church was torn down by order of General Howe, that the soldiers might convert into fuel the wood of which it was built.

By the bye, Mrs. Corder, an aged and intelligent female, living at the North end, informed me that, when a little girl, she witnessed from her father's house on the opposite side of the way, the demolition of this church; and that she was terrified at the noise of the falling beams and of the wooden walls, as they battered them down, and at the shouting and swearing of the soldiers as they quarrelled over their plunder. Nevertheless, when the work of destruction was over, and the soldiers all gone, she and other children of the neighborhood ran out to scramble among the rubbish—and she found and carried

home a little wooden footstool or cricket, that had evidently been thrown out from one of the demolished pews. I bought of my informant (who was in indigent circumstances) this humble and time-darkened relic, and it is now in possession of my youngest niece.

To return to the daughters of Dr. Byles.—They still lamented greatly over the privations endured that winter by the British army shut up and beleaguered in Boston; though certainly the same sufferings were shared by all the inhabitants that remained in the town.—And they grieved accordingly, to think that these inconveniencies finally compelled their English friends to take to their ships and depart.

Miss Mary Byles related to me, that on one occasion she had given to a hungry British soldier a piece of cold pork that had been left from dinner. A few evenings after, the same man knocked at the door, and requested to see one of the ladies—Miss Mary presented herself, and the grateful soldier slipped into her hand a paper containing a small quantity of the herb called by the whigs of that time "the detested tea;" and which it was then scarcely possible to obtain on any terms.

* * * * *

Several years elapsed before I again was in Boston. In the interim, I heard something of the Miss Byesses from ladies who knew and visited them. I understood that, at length, they had found it impossible to prevent what they had so long dreaded, the opening of a street that would take in their little green lawn, their old horse-chestnut trees, and that part of their house that stood directly across the way. For this surrender of their property, they received from the city an ample compensation in money; also their house was made as good or rather better than ever besides being new roofed and thoroughly repaired. The despoiled sisters, though another and more comfortable residence was offered to them during the time of their destruction, as they termed it, steadily persisted in remaining on their own domain during the whole process of its dismemberment. Their house, as they said, was cut in half; that part which faced the end of Tremont street being taken away. They mourned over the departure of every beam and plank as if each was an old friend—and so they truly were. And deep indeed was the affliction of the aged sisters when they saw, falling beneath the remorseless axe, their noble horse-chestnut trees whose scattered branches, as they lay on the grass, the old ladies declared, seemed to them like the dismembered limbs of children. At this juncture, their grief and indignation reached its climax; and they excited much sympathy even among professed utilitarians. There were many indulgent hearts in Boston that felt as if the improvement of this part of the city might yet have been delayed for a few short years, till after these venerable and harmless females should have closed their eyes for ever upon all that could attach them to this side of the grave. And that even if the march of public spirit should in consequence have allowed itself to pause a little longer in

this part of its road, "neither heaven nor earth would have grieved at the mercy."

Miss Mary Byles, who with more sprightliness had less strength of mind than her younger sister, never, as the saying is, held up her head again.—Her health and spirits declined from that time—she sunk slowly but surely; and after lingering some months, a few days of severe bodily suffering terminated all her afflictions, and consigned her mortal remains to their final resting-place beside her father. In the meantime she had lost her nephew, Mather Brown, the painter, who died at an advanced age in London and who was to have been the heir of all that his aunts possessed.

In addition to the rest of their little wealth, the Miss Byleses had in a sort of strong hold up stairs a chest of old-fashioned plate, no article of which was on any occasion used by them. Also, they retained some rare and valuable books that had belonged to their father, and a few curious and excellent mathematical instruments brought by him from England, and which the University of Harvard had vainly endeavoured to purchase from them. Among other articles was an immense burning-glass, said to be one of the largest in the world, and which the old ladies kept locked up in a closet, and carefully covered with a thick cloth, lest, as they said, it should set the house on fire.

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On a subsequent visit to the metropolis of the American east, I went to see the surviving Miss Byles; and when I reached the accustomed place I could scarcely recognize it. The main part of the old house was yet standing; but the loss of one end had given it quite a different aspect. There was no longer the green inclosure, the fence-gate, and the narrow path through the grass—the door opened directly upon a brick pavement and on the dusty street. To be sure there was a fresh-looking wooden door-step. New tenements had been run up all about the now noisy vicinity, which had entirely lost its air of quiet retirement. All was now symptomatic of bustle and business. The ancient dwelling-place of the Byles family had ceased to be picturesque. It had been repaired and made comfortable; but denuded of its guardian trees there was nothing more to screen from full view its extreme unsightliness. Above its weather-blackened walls (which the sisters would not allow to be painted, lest it should look *totally* unlike itself) the new shingles of the roof seemed out of keeping—I thought of all the poor ladies must have suffered during the transformation of their paternal domicile.

On knocking at the door, it was opened for me by an extremely good-looking neatly dressed matron, who conducted me into a room which I could scarcely believe was the original old parlor. The homely antique furniture had disappeared, and was replaced by some very neat and convenient articles of modern form. The floor was nicely carpeted; there were new chairs and a new table,—a bed with white curtains and counterpane, and window-curtains to match.—Nothing looked familiar but the antique crown chair and the pictures.

I found Miss Catharine Byles seated in a rocking chair with a pillow at her back.—She looked paler, thinner, sharper, and much older than when I last saw her. She was no longer in a white short gown but wore a whole gown of black merino, with a nice white muslin collar and a regular day-cap trimmed with black ribbon.

Though glad to find her so much improved as to comfort, I take shame to myself when I confess that I felt something not unlike disappointment, at seeing such a change in the ancient lady and her attributes. The quaintness, and I may say the picturesqueness of the old mansion, and its accessories, and also that of its octogenarian mistress, seemed gone for ever. I am sorry to acknowledge that at the moment I thought of the French artist Lebrun, who, meeting in the street an old tattered beggar-man with long gray locks and a venerable silver beard, was struck with the idea of his being a capital subject for the pencil, and engaged him to come to him next day and have his likeness transferred to canvass. The beggar came; but thinking that all people who sit for their pictures should look spruce, he had bedizened himself in a very genteel suit of Sunday clothes, with knee-buckles and silk stockings; his face and hands nicely washed; his chin shaved clean; and his hair dressed and powdered; the whole man looking altogether as unpaintable as possible.—All artists will sympathize with the disappointed Lebrun, as he contemplated his beggar with dismay, and exclaimed—"oh! you are spoiled!—you are spoiled!" I suppose it is because I am a painter's sister, that I caught myself nearly on the point of making a similar ejaculation on seeing the new-modelling of Miss Catharine Byles, and her domicile.

But a truce with such unpardonable thoughts—Miss Catharine recognized me at once, and seemed very glad to see me. She soon began to talk about her troubles, and her sorrows, and alluded in a very affecting manner to the loss of her sister, who she said had died of a broken heart in consequence of the changes made in their little patrimony; having always hoped to die, as she had lived, in her father's house just as he had left it—"But the worst of all pursued Miss Catharine—"was the cutting down of the old trees.—Every stroke of the axe seemed like a blow upon our hearts. Neither of us slept a wink all that night. Poor sister Mary; she soon fretted herself to death. To think of our having to submit to these dreadful changes, all at once; when for ten years our dear father's spectacles, were never removed from the place in which he had last laid them down."

I attempted to offer a few words of consolation to Miss Catharine, but she wept bitterly and would not be comforted. "Ah!"—said she—"this is one of the consequences of living in a republic. Had we been still under a king, he would have known nothing about our little property, and we could have enjoyed it in our own way as long as we lived. There is one comfort, that not a creature in the states will be any the better for what *we* shall leave behind us—Sister and I have taken care of that. We have bequeathed every article to our relations in Nova Scotia since our nephew, poor boy, was so unfortunate as

to die before us. In all our trials it has been a great satisfaction to us to reflect that when everything was changing around, grace has been given us to remain faithful to our church and king."

The loyal old lady then informed me that, on his accession to the throne, she had written a letter of congratulation to his Britannic Majesty, William the Fourth, whom she remembered having seen in Boston before the revolution, when he was there as Duke of Clarence and an officer in his father's navy. In this epistle she had earnestly assured him that the family of Dr. Byles always were, and always would be, most true and fervent in their devotion to their liege lord and rightful sovereign the king of England.—To have attempted to argue her out of this feeling, the pride and solace of her declining life, would have been cruel; and moreover entirely useless—I did not hint to her the improbability of her letter ever having reached the royal personage to whom it was addressed.

The old lady told me that her chief occupation now was to write serious poetry, and she gave me a copy of some stanzas which she had recently composed. The verses were tolerably good, and written in a hand remarkably neat, handsome, and steady.

* * * * *

Miss Catharine Byles survived her sister Miss Mary about two years, and died of gradual decay in the summer of 1837. Her remains repose with those of her father and sister beneath the flooring of Trinity Church. They left the whole of their property to their loyalist relations in Nova Scotia, true to their long-cherished resolution that no republican should inherit the value of a farthing from them. The representative of the family is said to have come to Boston and taken possession of the bequest.

It is curious, as well as instructive, to contemplate the infinite varieties of human character, and the strange phases under which human intellect presents itself. The peculiarities of these two sisters strikingly evinced the lasting power of early impressions, almost always indelible when acting upon minds that have not been expanded by intercourse with the world. For instance—their steadfast, gratuitous and useless loyalty, cherished for monarchs whom they had never seen, and who had forgotten the very existence of Dr. Byles (if indeed they had ever remembered it) and who, of course, neither knew nor cared anything about his daughters; their rooted antipathy

to the republic in which they lived, and where if they had not persisted in shutting their eyes they must have seen everything flourishing around them; the strict economy which induced them to deny themselves even the comforts of life, and their willingness to be assisted by the benevolent rather than render themselves independent by an advantageous disposal of their property. The almost idolatrous devotion with which they clung to the inanimate objects that had been familiar to them in early life, showed an intensity of feeling which was both pitied and respected by their friends, though reason perhaps would not have sanctioned its entire indulgence. By living so much alone, by visiting at no other house, by never going out of their native town, by perpetually thinking and talking over the occurrences of their youth, they had wrought themselves into a firm belief that no way was right but their own way, no opinions correct but their own opinions: and above all, that in no other dwelling-place but their paternal mansion was it possible for them to be happy or even to exist.

As a set-off to their weaknesses, their vanities and their prejudices, it gives me pleasure to bear testimony to the kindness of their deportment, the soft tones of their voices, and to the old-fashioned polish of their manners; which at once denoted them to be ladies, even in their short-gowns and petticoats.

Though, in the latter part of their lives, the daughters of Dr. Byles were subjected to the sore trial of seeing the little green lawn on which they had played when children converted into a dusty street, and the fine old trees (which would take a century to replace) demolished in a few minutes before their eyes: still they were both permitted to die beneath the same roof under which their existence had commenced. The house of their heavenly father has many mansions; and there, in their eternal abode, now that their mental vision has cleared, and their souls have been purified from the dross of mortality, they have learnt the futility of having set their hearts too steadfastly on a dwelling erected by human hands; and more than all, of fostering prejudices in favor of that system of government which, according to the signs of the times, is fast and deservedly passing away. Is it too much to hope that ere the lapse of another half century, not a being in the civilized world will render the homage of a bended knee, except to the King of Heaven.

SONNET.

A DREAM of love, too short, but ah, how dear!
Hath fled and left me sad and desolate.
Oft from my lids I dash the silent tear—
And mourn as mourns the wood-dove for her mate,
Who on some branch of thunder-stricken oak
Wastes in complainings tremulous and low
Her gentle soul away. The charm is broke,

Which link'd me erst to joy. With pensive brow,
At midnight hour beneath the ruined pile,
Musing o'er change my vigil lone I keep,—
While streaming faint aslant the shattered aisle,
Soft on its moss the pillowed moonbeams sleep,
Or trim the flickering lamp and eager pore
On bard or sage in Hellas famed of yore. A. E. B.